

**Assurance Argument**  
**Kansas State University - KS**

**Review date: 4/11/2022**



## **Criterion 1 - Mission**

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The institution's mission is clear and articulated publicly; it guides the institution's operations.

### **Summary**

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The Kansas State University (K-State) mission statement describes the broad mission of K-State as a land grant university, focusing on teaching, research, and outreach. The mission defines K-State's commitment to serving the people of Kansas, the nation, and the world. Within the overarching K-State 2025 visionary plan, the university developed specific strategic action plans for: Research, Scholarly and Creative Activity, and Discovery; Undergraduate Educational Experience; Graduate Scholarly Experience; Engagement, Outreach, Extension, and Service; Faculty and Staff; Facilities and Infrastructure; and Athletics. It is through these seven broad areas that the university undertakes its day-to-day work.

The nature and scope of disciplines at K-State range from the original land grant areas to other programs that support a "highly skilled and educated citizenry." K-State's research programs are focused on advancing knowledge and the betterment of society. Outreach through extension programs, a full range of online programs and other engagement activities serves the people of Kansas and beyond. K-State's student support services and enrollment profile also reflect its mission. A variety of services are available to incoming and current students whether they are studying in an in-person, blended or online format. Communication about the university mission, vision and programs is managed by the division of communications and marketing in collaboration with colleges and campuses. University leaders address periodic letters to the university community and affiliated agencies such as the K-State Alumni Association and KSU Foundation, also communicate with donors, alumni and friends of the university.

K-State operates within the system of the Kansas Board of Regents (KBOR) and actions are overseen by KBOR, as required by the Constitution of the State of Kansas. K-State provides many public service and engagement programs, especially as delivered by K-State Research and Extension. As a state supported university, there are no financial returns nor any investors other than the state of Kansas. The university utilizes structures such as advisory boards to communicate with external constituencies and communities of interest.

The university embeds elements of diversity in the curriculum and a variety of cocurricular activities. As one of the five universitywide student learning outcomes, diversity must be included in the curriculum of all academic programs. Cocurricular activities are institutionally guided by the university Chief Diversity and Inclusion Officer as well as the Office of Diversity and Multicultural Student Affairs. Efforts to raise the university's consciousness on diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging are also dispersed at college and department levels throughout the university. Universitywide strategy has also been guided by the development of the Action Plan for a More Inclusive K-State.

## **Criterion 2 - Integrity: Ethical and Responsible Conduct**

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The institution acts with integrity; its conduct is ethical and responsible.

### **Summary**

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The Kansas State University (K-State) current mission was updated and approved by the Kansas Board of Regents (KBOR) in 2008. The university's financial statements are audited at the state level for all KBOR institutions. Budgeting processes are internally governed by a multi-tiered structure with the Core Executive Team being the decision-making body. Policy manuals provide guidance and procedures for all aspects of academic activity, including the length of the academic calendar, the structure of the university and duties of administrators, faculty positions and hiring of personnel, all aspects of evaluations and promotions, expectations for classroom teaching, student behavior, the appropriate and ethical use of information technology, and many others. K-State operates at a high level of integrity through shared governance by faculty, students and administration. Complaints and grievances filed by students, faculty, and staff, are handled effectively through various procedures and proactively addressed through the work of units like the Office of Institutional Equity, Human Capital Services and the Honor Council. Campus climate is intentionally assessed through survey administration, discussion and action planning.

Websites for various campus offices provide a transparent view of K-State for students, parents and the public. Websites are updated when changes emerge to maintain accuracy and clarity for the wider K-State community, including current and prospective students. To enhance transparency, the university launched a comprehensive review and redesign of the tuition and fees structure. K-State has several websites devoted to providing data and support for any claims it makes regarding its contributions to the public and state of Kansas across many areas. These include data/information sites for the level, amount, and impact of its research. K-State also promotes its programs and local impact on communities through K-State Research and Extension.

Members of the KBOR are appointed by the governor, serve a three-year term, are provided with a statewide orientation with KBOR staff, and gather for annual retreats with university presidents and chancellors. KBOR has a strategic plan, Building a Future, which prioritizes the needs of families, businesses and the Kansas economy. The broad mission of the KBOR and the range of universities and colleges under their purview requires that, at times, they develop policies that pertain to all. Regents visit each institution every two years providing them with a clearer and more detailed understanding of each institution. KBOR members are to work in the interests of the Board and the institutions that comprise the system. They may disclose potential conflicts of interest. The K-State president's responsibilities, compensation, and annual assessment of performance are detailed in KBOR policy.

The university policy on and commitment to academic freedom is found in the K-State University Handbook. KBOR also strongly supports the principle of academic freedom.

The K-State University Handbook details the policy on integrity in research and scholarly activity. The University Research Compliance Office and other specific university committees provide oversight of research activities. Faculty, staff, and students involved in research activities are required to be educated and trained in the responsible conduct of research. The Honor and Integrity System and information technology usage policies help guide students and the campus community in the ethical use of information resources. The university requires all students to take and abide by the Honor Pledge. The university follows established investigation and adjudication procedures to enforce the Honor and Integrity System.

## **Criterion 3 - Teaching and Learning: Quality, Resources and Support**

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The institution provides quality education, wherever and however its offerings are delivered.

### **Summary**

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Kansas State University (K-State) ensures the quality of its offerings through internal programmatic and institutional processes of regular program/course assessment, academic program review, and student and graduate surveys. External accreditation processes ensure educational currency and relevance. The university oversees the education to focus instruction and credential learning outcomes in programs through its five undergraduate student learning outcomes and three graduate student learning outcomes. All programs, regardless of delivery mode, fulfill the same quality control requirements for Program Review and the Assessment of Student Learning processes. As a Carnegie High Research institution, K-State faculty participate in research across all colleges and disciplines.

The undergraduate general education program emphasizes both depth and breadth of knowledge. Depth is articulated and assessed through undergraduate learning outcomes through program-based student learning assessment. Breadth is articulated and assessed through the K-State 8 program. All assessments collected annually. Undergraduate depth of learning data and the broad exposure to the K-State 8 areas for breadth are annually reviewed, while graduate depth of learning data are reviewed on a four-year cycle.

Diversity is one of the university level student learning outcomes, The K-State 8 dispersion includes two diversity-focused set of courses. To reflect human diversity appropriate for its mission, K-State's 2025 strategic plan strives to increase the hiring and retention of appropriately qualified instructors and staff of underrepresented groups. A process for equivalent experience helps to ensure instructor qualifications. In general, K-State requires instructors to have the degree or credential at least one step higher than the students they teach; or have equivalent experience that would qualify their teaching at that level. The performance of all faculty members is evaluated annually and is conducted by department heads with input from a faculty evaluation committee. Non-tenured faculty members are provided additional annual feedback on their performance through the reappointment process. The institution also has policies geared to motivate tenured faculty to maintain high levels of performance. Student support staff are appropriately qualified and trained to perform their responsibilities.

K-State provides appropriate student support services for its students at all levels. To support learning, the university created an online Student Success Course to be a hub to access resources. At the graduate level, all programs include an introductory course guiding success in their chosen area of study. The university offers several placement exams to guide students and advisors in course selection in both the undergraduate and graduate levels. Students who do not meet the Qualified Admissions standards are required to participate in academic coaching and sometimes remedial courses. K-State's academic advising as a teaching model is delivered by the

colleges and coordinated centrally by the vice provost for student success. Students are required to meet with an academic advisor prior to enrollment. Afterwards, students provide feedback about their advising experience.

## **Criterion 4 - Teaching and Learning: Evaluation and Improvement**

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The institution demonstrates responsibility for the quality of its educational programs, learning environments and support services, and it evaluates their effectiveness for student learning through processes designed to promote continuous improvement.

### **Summary**

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Kansas State University (K-State) has historically participated in the Kansas Board of Regents (KBOR) academic program review and other relevant external accreditation processes. The institution currently has a task force in place to develop a more rigorous data-informed annual academic program renewal process to guide program enhancement. All accredited programs at K-State are approved and compliant with full accreditation, certification, or licensure.

To enable credit for prior learning ranging for all incoming students, the KBOR's transfer and articulation policy provides seamless approval of prior credits across the public postsecondary education system in Kansas. Policy is followed for military and AP credit. K-State maintains and exercises authority of the quality of any dual credit. The Curriculum Management System is used for adding new or modifying courses, which includes maintaining control of prerequisite expectations. Senior survey reports provide data on student educational experiences and alumni survey reports provide feedback about post-graduation success.

Assessments of student learning are monitored within programs, but reported institutionally. All undergraduate and graduate programs assess student learning outcomes through clearly defined assessment plans. The office of assessment guides and sustains the process for the assessment of student learning and for achievement of learning goals in academic and cocurricular offerings. The student success and student life units provide annual assessment reports to the office of assessment. All assessment reporting groups receive feedback from their program/unit/college assessment committees as well as the office of assessment to guide enhancement in assessment processes. The processes include the use of visualization technology, which provides opportunities for in-depth analysis of student learning data.

Improving student success is a key focus of the university's K-State 2025 strategic plan. K-State has set goals for improving student retention, persistence, and degree completion. A focus on reducing equity gaps has led to more intentional collaboration across the university. In addition to tracking its own progress, K-State also compares its progress to peer institutions and analyzes the data at a granular level. Colleges, the Office of Student Success, and Student Life, use reports to monitor retention, persistence, and completion rates to determine the impact of the programs they implement and to design new programs. Some of the retention and graduation strategies have been general while others have focused on specific populations. There have been substantial increases in 1-year retention rate, 4-year retention rate, and the 6-year retention rate over the past decade.

## **Criterion 5 - Institutional Effectiveness, Resources and Planning**

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The institution's resources, structures, processes and planning are sufficient to fulfill its mission, improve the quality of its educational offerings, and respond to future challenges and opportunities.

### **Summary**

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As a land-grant university, Kansas State University's (K-State) mission is always in the center to guide the university's administrative processes, with emphases on community, collaboration, and shared governance, to fulfill its mission. Major policies, procedures, and practices of the university are developed through gathering inputs from key constituent groups, such as the Faculty Senate, Student Governing Association, University Support Staff Senate, and/or committees and councils. Surveys are also broadly used to collect feedback. The restructured Office of Institutional Research and Assessment serves as a main catalyst and key source of information to advocate and build a culture of using data to reach informed decision throughout the university.

With a budget over \$900M for FY 2022 and more than 4,200 full-time and 5,000 part-time and student employees, K-State's resource base supports its educational offerings and its plans for maintaining and strengthening their quality in the future. KSU Foundation, with its endowment over \$860M, also provides much needed support for institutional operations and student aid. The university has seen a significant decline in in-state undergraduate student enrollment due to multiple factors (e.g., college-age population decline in Kansas, in-state competition, and the protracted COVID-19 pandemic), while maintaining steady growth in online and graduate enrollment as well as enrollment on K-State Salina campus and K-State Olathe. The implementation of Strategic Enrollment Management plan actions, coupled with the new Responsibility Centered Management budget model, which incentivizes growth, will begin to turn the overall enrollment trend around. The newly-launched Academic Program Review and Revitalization project will also serve as a venue for programs to focus on innovation and improvement.

Ongoing assessment of student learning, program review, and evaluation of operations have been a core part of daily lives of faculty, staff, and administration at K-State. K-State 2025 has been the guiding plan for the university in many aspects of planning, budgeting, and investing resources. As a public research university, K-State has built a strong research administration infrastructure to support its comprehensive research enterprise. Under former President Myers, the new university leadership at that time, K-State continued the plan but with a more nimble and practical approach. The university recently announced a refresh to K-State 2025 along with four specific strategic initiatives. These new initiatives will further support the connections between K-State mission and planning and budgeting processes. It is worth noting that the 15th President of the university, Dr. Richard Linton, just started on February 14th, 2022. His new leadership, vision, and long-term experiences at multiple land-grant institutions will undoubtedly take K-State to a new era.